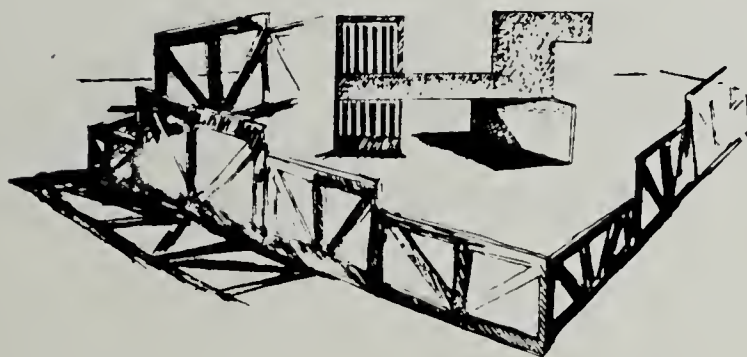
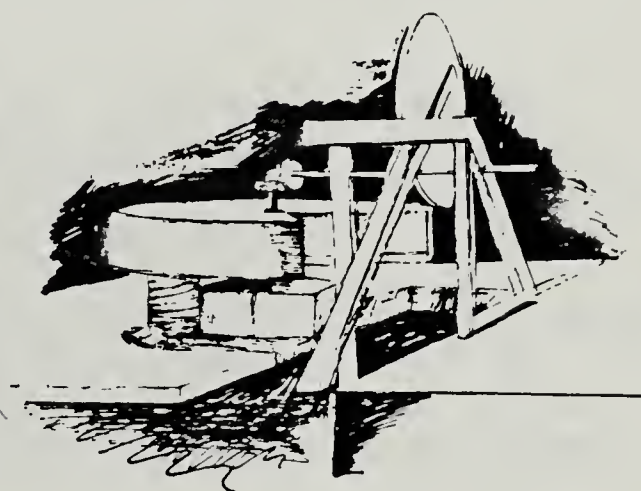


Architectural Proposal for the Gowanus Area
Submitted to the Gowanus Canal Community
Development Corporation



The drama of the existing landscape provides an opportunity for the use of unusual spaces for studios and galleries - where industrial, residential, and public activities can interact. The structural trusses beneath the elevated subway stations would be an example of such "found" space.

The Gowanus Water Clock is an example of an infill structure which would relate to the industrial nature of the site while providing public access to the canal itself. The motion of the tides causes it to rotate gently, based on a simple gear mechanism. The use of pre-industrial technology may be a possible approach to issues of energy and pollution.



Monuments provide a public expression for the ideals and values of a community. The people who built and worked in the Gowanus area would be recognized by a memorial sculpture which would have their names carved in stone. This monument/park would be sited so as to provide a symbolic gateway to the Canal area.

GOWANUS INDUSTRIAL ART PARK

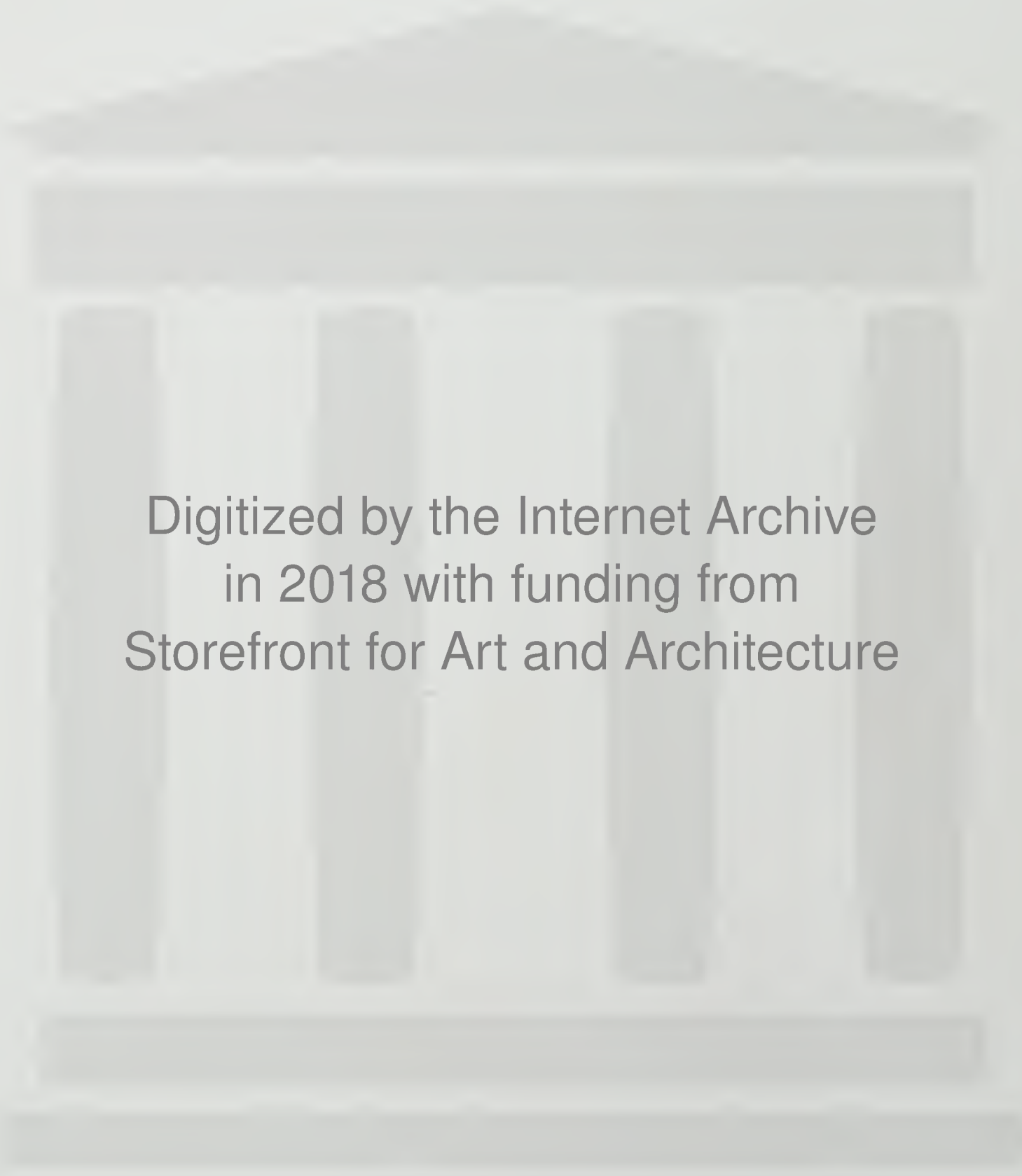
In recent years it has become increasingly common for artists to locate in light manufacturing and industrial areas of the city. In part, this was because of the availability of relatively inexpensive work spaces, but also it was because artists were attracted to the stimulating environment of the manufacturing and technological process. In the city of New York, communities such as South Street Seaport, Soho and Long Island City are examples of this phenomenon.

The introduction of working artists into the industrial landscape oftentimes led to a dramatic change in the way these communities were perceived. Their presence and their activities helped to establish a conceptual framework -- a method of organizing the random and disparate bits of the physical environment into a cohesive structure.

Kevin Lynch in his book The Image of the City speaks of imageability, which is "that quality in a physical object which gives it a high probability of evoking a strong image in any given observer." He further describes it as "the shape, color or arrangement which facilitates the making of vividly identified, powerfully structured highly useful mental images of the environment."

The imageability or process of organization which developed in communities such as Soho became extraordinarily powerful. The relationship between the existing manufacturers and the newly arrived artists gradually melded into a finely structured mental image. The intensity of this symbiotic relationship had a profound impact on the physical environment of the larger community. Everything from the graffiti on the walls to the attire of the residents and even the garbage littering the sidewalk served to reinforce this mental image.

The process of structuring the image of Soho, though commercially and socially so successful, ironically proved to be the destruction of its creators. The attraction of the created community exerted a powerful attraction to outside interests, with the result that large numbers of small manufacturers and working artists were gradually displaced. The Gowanus Industrial Area offers an extraordinary opportunity to apply lessons learned from the Soho experience.



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Proposal

"Only Powerful Civilizations can begin to act on their total environment at a significant scale."

Kevin Lynch

While the process of symbiosis in community relationships usually evolves spontaneously and randomly, it is proposed that in the Gowanus Area that it be planned and designed as a "total environment at a significant scale." It is imperative that the existing communities and structures, whether residential or industrial, remain intact. It is proposed that the area be "infilled" with structures such as the "Gowanus Water Clock" -- structures that would be utilized as facilities for studios, support industries such as printing, film processing, paint manufacturing, materials distribution, etc. These structures while being completely functional would also be physical "memories" or allusions to the inherent industrial nature of the existing environment. The existing residential community would be enhanced by increased employment opportunity in the "new" industries, and the existing industries would be reinforced by the incoming structures. This is not a master plan which, in the traditional sense, would create a wholly new use for an area. Rather it is conceived as a means of enhancing in an unobtrusive and imaginative manner the natural forces currently at work in the area.

This plan would also establish a network -- a physical network connecting the structures in a 20 block area, in the manner of a series of wind traps, water wheels, enclosed tubes, platforms, gates, etc. There is enough sun, wind, water and light in the area to passively energize a large proportion of the work spaces. The process of networking could eventually provide more formal spaces for exhibits of works produced by the artists.

It is presumed that within a very short time after the introduction of this network that the community would be subjected to tremendous development pressures. This would necessitate the formation of a non-profit corporation that would develop commercial and retail space in the network, and be responsible for the orderly implementation of the plans. This group would also ensure that the integrity of the project would be protected. All revenues generated by rentals in the network would be used to support the arts activities within the complex.

